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THE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH ANGELS — MASTER OF THE MORRISON TRIPTYCH
CENTER PANEL OF THE MORRISON TRIPTYCH — FLEMISH, ACTIVE 1500-1510
GIFT OF EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
FOUNDED BY EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

THE MORRISON TRIPTYCH

In the years just before 1500 Antwerp replaced Bruges as the commercial center of northern Europe's chief trading district, the dukedom of Burgundy. Antwerp's location gave unrivalled access by river to the sea and by roads and waterways to the interior. It was the destruction of just this cross roads position that contributed to the decline of Bruges, for by 1494 the silting up of the river Zwyn was complete and ocean-going ships could no longer reach her quays. This disaster capped a series of political and military disturbances following the death in 1477 of Charles the Bold, the last duke of Burgundy to rule from Bruges before his realm passed into Hapsburg hands. Unemployment soon followed, and many of the artisans who had furnished the splendid and ostentatious Burgundian court, her wealthy middle class and the representatives of foreign business interests joined the exodus of merchants and bankers to Antwerp.

There was an active market for pictures among the newly rich burghers of Antwerp who wanted to embellish their churches and houses. The heavy demand drew ambitious artists from the many Netherlandish and Rhineland towns with active ateliers, and soon after 1500 there was a sudden increase in the number of paintings produced at the booming port. Many converging influences can be traced; slightly later a distinctive local style began to develop, but the years around the turn of the century present many problems of identity and attribution.

Questions of this nature come up in the case of an altarpiece of major importance recently acquired for the Museum's collection of early Flemish paintings as the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey[1].

John the Baptist
Left Wing, Interior

Adam
Left Wing, Exterior

It is a triptych executed at Antwerp by an anonymous artist some time between 1500 and 1510. For many years it belonged to the collection of the Morrison family in England; in 1915 the noted art historian M. J. Friedländer used it as the key work among a small group of pictures which he felt shared certain characteristics of individual style. The group was attributed to an artist whom he named the Master of the Morrison Triptych[2]. There have been many attempts to identify this unknown master with various names appearing on the rolls of the Antwerp guild of painters, but thus far no conclusive evidence leading to a solution has come to light.[3]

The Morrison Triptych is a free version of a three-part altarpiece by the Bruges painter Hans Memling, which dates from about 1485-90 and is now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum at Vienna.[4] That the composition was a popular one is proven by similar works in the National Gallery, Washington and the Uffizi, Florence[5]. The Morrison Master repeated it for his Antwerp patron, making modifications which are of considerable interest for what they tell us about the rather archaizing style of late fifteenth century Bruges as exemplified by Memling and as transmuted by the more progressive atmosphere of Antwerp in the first days of its new prosperity.

The Virgin holding the Christ Child is enthroned in a bizarre Flamboyant Gothic porch. He reaches toward a delightfully smiling angel who stops playing the *lira da braccia*, an ancestor of the violin, to offer him a pear. At the right, a second angel continues the heavenly concert on a lute; this is an invention of the Morrison

JOHN THE EVANGELIST
RIGHT WING, INTERIOR

Master which replaces Memling's kneeling donor. The engaging expressions and delicate execution of these winged figures make them among the most attractive features of the work. Above the central group, putti struggle to support heavy garlands of fruit and flowers, decorative Italian motifs rare in 1500 when the Flemish were yet untouched by Renaissance forms. In the upper corners strangely formed capitals support tiny doll-like figures painted in grisaille that enact the Old Testament stories of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis XXII, 9-13) and Jephthah and his daughter (Judges XI, 39), in allusion to the sacrifice and redemption of Christ.

Through a simple arcade we look out upon an idyllic landscape of woods and meadows flooded with the gentle radiance of a cloud-flecked afternoon sky. In the distance, the land drops down to a valley and rises again to a range of blue, rolling hills. Winding roads lead to a church, castles, farmhouses, a mill, and by a quiet pool a woman does her washing as swans and ducks float nearby upon the dark water. It is rather characteristic of Memling that he composed familiar and picturesque elements of landscape to make a pleasing background for these sacred figures who are enclosed by architecture of such an imaginary and playful character. The Morrison Master shared this spirit, and although the Virgin and her attendant angels are arrayed in costly raiment this is an intimate group that rejoices in a gentle, friendly, almost homely way.

On the left wing of the opened triptych stands John the Baptist wearing a blue robe over the brown camel's hair tunic and carrying his attribute, the lamb. John the Evangelist appears on the right wing holding the chalice, signifying that he was an apostle. On the outer sides of the wings the figures of Adam and Eve appear in red marble niches. In Netherlandish painting, this concept originated with Jan van Eyck's Ghent altarpiece, the Adoration of the Lamb of 1432. There the first man and woman are monumental, harshly realistic humans who seem to press against the confining frames. The Morrison Master transposed Memling's version of the Eyckian man and woman in his own, very different spirit. The scale of the figures has been greatly reduced and their bodies made slim and delicate, as though figurines were intended. This preciousness is intensified by the rounded pedestals on which they stand and the child-like expressions of the faces. Medieval symbolists developed the meaning of Adam and Eve beyond simple representations of the first humans; they came to signify the redemption of mankind after the Fall. Later, theologians construed EVE into AVE, the first word pronounced by the Angel of the Annunciation, and occasionally the Virgin Mary was even called the "new Eve". Thus Adam and Eve symbolize the Old and New orders when the wings are closed, just as when opened the Baptist and the Evangelist, respectively, fulfill the same functions.

EVE
RIGHT WING, EXTERIOR

It is the greater freedom given to light and the effects which it produces upon atmosphere and space that mark the Morrison Master's most individual contribution to the Bruges work which served as his model. Perhaps he was influenced in this respect by Quentin Massys, the leading painter of Antwerp in 1500, although no specific connection is evident. Penetration of the back wall by large openings allows the eye to range into the distance at the same time that the enclosed foreground is given a new spaciousness. Light, falling from the left, harmonizes the bold, varied reds and

pinks which give a shimmering life to the picture's surface. Dark shadows are cast by heavy folds, but there is a rippling, almost iridescent appearance produced by the yellow robe of the lute-playing angel. The geometric patterns of the colored marble floor and Anatolian rug are additional enrichment and a device for drawing the eye back into space.

It is most exceptional to have a triptych with both wings surviving. It is even more extraordinary to find one in a virtually perfect state of preservation, having escaped fire, neglect, or the attentions of overly vigorous restorers for four and a half centuries. If Robert Campin and Jan van Eyck were not first in using oil as a binding medium for their paint, they did make innovations in the technique of painting which were the means for achieving the exquisite realism of their own work and that of their successors[6]. The opaque pigments employed by medieval artists were replaced by superimposed translucent layers that produced the glowing surface characteristic of early Flemish painting. These pictures seemed miraculous to all who saw them. The agents of the great Italian, Spanish and English mercantile interests and members of diplomatic missions acquired portraits and devotional paintings for themselves and acted as intermediaries for the commissioning of important works by donors and ecclesiastics in their homelands. As these pictures were spread abroad, they had a profound influence on the course of European painting. Even movements so self-sufficient as the Renaissance of Venice and Florence learned much from the Flemings, taking over and modifying the oil technique and wedding their passionate observation of nature to the great formal and plastic inventions of the Italians. The Morrison Triptych represents in its form, color and technique one of the greatest periods in European painting along its course of development from medieval times to modern times.

1) 54.5; oil on panel; center, 38¼ x 23⅝ inches; wings, 43⅜ x 14½ inches.
Ex Coll: John Morrison, Fonthill House, Wilshire.
Exhib: London, Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1892, no. 42; Guildhall, 1906, no. 35; Burlington Fine Arts Club, Loan Exhibition of Flemish and Belgian Art, 1927, Memorial Volume, p. 28, no. 60, reprod. Plate XXXII (attributed to Hans Memling).

2) M. J. Friedländer, Der Meister der Morrison Triptychons, in *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst,* N. F. XXVI, 1915; also, Friedländer, *Die Altniederländische Malerei,* VII, pp. 80-83, 129, no. 81, reprod. Plates LVI-LVII.

3) Most recently: W. R. Valentiner, Simon van Herlam, The Master of the Morrison Triptych, in *Gazette des Beaux Arts,* XLV, January 1955.

4) Friedländer, *Altniederl. Malerei,* VI, p. 116, no. 9. Karl Voll, *Memling,* 1909, reprod. pp. 117-119.

5) Washington: Friedländer, *ibid.,* plate XXXIV.
Florence: Friedländer, *ibid.,* plate XXXV.

6) Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting,* 1954, I, pp. 151-153.

THE BULLS OF BORDEAUX — BRAVE BULL FRANCISCO GOYA

THE BULLS OF BORDEAUX — BULLFIGHT IN A DIVIDED RING FRANCISCO GOYA

THE BULLS OF BORDEAUX

IN HIS SEVENTY-NINTH YEAR, while in exile at Bordeaux for his political activities, the great Spanish painter, Francisco Goya, produced some of the most remarkable works of his career. These were the four lithographs comprising the set known as The Bulls of Bordeaux, recently acquired by the Toledo Museum.

Always a pioneer in art, he was among the first to make use of the then newly-discovered medium of lithography. He learned the process from a friend, Cardano, who brought it to him from Paris. In all he produced about twenty lithographs, the earliest appearing about 1820.

Of all the graphics lithography is best suited to the painter, with its free brush-like draughtsmanship and its immediate reproduction of the artist's drawing. Goya made use of its special qualities of infinite gradations from black to white, using to the fullest his mastery of composition and light and shade. He worked on these prints in a most interesting way, as reported by an eye witness: "He executed them on an easel, the stone set up like a canvas, holding his crayons like brushes without ever sharpening them. He remained standing, moving away or coming close to observe an effect. As was customary, he covered the entire stone with a uniform gray tone, next picking out with a scraper the parts which were to appear lighter. Finally, the crayon was used to deepen the shadows or to indicate the figures, giving them movement."

Goya was intensely fascinated with the colour and action of the bull ring and depicted its drama as only a Spaniard could. Not only are these prints vivid representations of the Spanish national sport, they are also among the greatest lithographs ever made and upon them rests Goya's fame as a lithographer.

One of the subjects is especially important for the Toledo Museum's collection, since its composition is identical with that of his fine painting, A Bull Fight, acquired in 1929 as the gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. In the set of lithographs it is titled Brave Bull,—also sometimes called Picador Gored by a Bull. Even with the absence of color it is an effective and powerful work. The other three prints, The Celebrated American Mariano Ceballos, Spanish Entertainment, and Bullfight in a Divided Ring, this subject also somewhat related in composition to the museum's painting, portray dramatically various aspects of the spectacle.

Drawn in 1825, The Bulls of Bordeaux may be compared with the earlier series of the Tauromachios, etchings of similar subjects, a set of which is also in the Museum's collection. These prints and others by Goya are now on exhibition in Gallery 12.

DUTCH GLASS IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION

In a number of the still-life paintings of the seventeenth century, as seen in the Museum's recent exhibition, Dutch Painting—The Golden Age, and in its collection, are shown glass drinking vessels of various shapes and styles, furnishing eloquent evidence of the use of glass during the period. While not all of the glass pictured is of Dutch origin, as imported wares from Venice, Germany, and England, were among the cherished possessions of many prosperous citizens of The Netherlands, the making of glass was one of the flourishing industries of Holland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Beginning with the era of Dutch independence from Spain in 1609, there were glass houses recorded at The Hague, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and in other towns.

Some of the glass was made in imitation of the fashionable Venetian styles, and it is almost impossible to distinguish it from that produced in Italy. Early German glass also had a strong influence on the wares of The Netherlands and the green glass which the Germans called "Waldglas" continued to be used in preference to the clear colorless glass for certain Germanic shapes.

Diamond-engraved Roemer
W. van Heemskerk, 1676

Roemer Carel du Quesne, 1661

One of the typically northern forms, and a favorite with the still-life artists, is the Roemer, with a broad hollow stem, decorated with applied prunts, and a foot formed by spinning a thread of glass around a wooden or metal core. The bowl itself is sometimes shallow, sometimes flaring, most frequently a gracefully elongated globe-shape. It opens into the stem, making a vessel of great capacity.

In the Museum's great glass collection is a fine group of Dutch glass, recently acquired, among which are several Roemers. Outstanding among them is a beautiful example of the work of Willem Jacobsz van Heemskerk of Leyden, 1613-1692, who was a master of the calligraphic style of decoration. Our piece is of light green glass, with a tall stem on which are "raspberry"-moulded prunts, the bowl having the words "Semper Diem" diamond-engraved in characteristic van Heemskerk fashion. The glass is signed and dated "W. van Heemskerk, aetatis 63, Anno 1676".

GROUP OF DUTCH SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GLASSES

An unusually large Roemer, measuring about eleven inches in height, the diameter of the broad bowl five and one-half inches, is signed and dated "Carel du Quesne 1661." The decoration of eight jovial figures, six of them playing musical instruments, under a border of grape vines is executed in copper-wheel engraving, a technique which was only then beginning to rival the popularity of diamond-point.

Some of the Roemers have undecorated bowls, some have prunts not impressed with the "raspberry" pattern but simply drawn out to a point. Their greenish coloring adds greatly to the charm of these simple well-proportioned pieces. Two of these in the collection, of varying shapes with sharp-pointed prunts, are similar to the glasses shown in the Museum's painting, Still Life With Oysters by Pieter Claesz, dated 1642.

STILL LIFE WITH OYSTERS — PIETER CLAESZ

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The Museum is offering two outstanding groups of concerts for the next season. If you have not yet sent in your subscription, do so now. For information on either series, telephone or write the Museum concert Office.

PERISTYLE SERIES:

The Philharmonia Orchestra of London under Herbert von Karajan will head the Peristyle Series. One of Europe's great orchestras, it will make its first American tour. Von Karajan, regular conductor of the Philharmonia for several seasons, was recently appointed permanent conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Also appearing for the first time in Toledo will be the Mozarteum Orchestra of Salzburg under Ernst Maerzendorfer; Luboshutz and Nemenoff, duo-pianists; Witold Malcuzynski, pianist; Isaac Stern, America's greatest violinist; and Victoria de Los Angeles, leading soprano of the Metropolitan Opera. The Cleveland Orchestra and the Minneapolis Symphony, both long favorites with Toledo audiences, will return.

GALLERY SERIES:

The Budapest String Quartet, the most frequently requested group of its type, will return after an absence of several years. Other attractions will be the American Chamber Orchestra under Robert Scholz, consisting of twenty players, the first American group to attain the excellence shown by visiting European chamber orchestras, and the celebrated Amadeus Quartet. Other concerts will be announced as the membership grows.